

Jo Johnson MP,
Minister of State for Transport,
Department for Transport,
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Road,
London,
SW1P 4DR

Ann Coffey MP
Member of Parliament for Stockport
Tel: 0161 483 2600

Sent Via e-mail: Jo.Johnson MP@dft.gsi.gov.uk

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Dear Minister,

Re: Proposed changes to train services at Heaton Chapel.

As you know the new franchise agreement with Arriva Rail North promised significant improvements with new trains and additional services. Heaton Chapel within my Stockport constituency is already one of the busiest stations within Greater Manchester with over 800,000 passengers per year. My constituents have already been waiting a significant amount of time for promised improvements and had looked forward to the new services and increased capacity that they expected to be implemented. I was therefore very concerned to be told that in fact my constituents would instead be facing reductions in services due to the introduction of the May 2018 timetable, and would ask that you look into this as a matter of urgency so that they can be assured that this situation will be improved.

Constituents first raised concerns with me about this matter last year after Northern, who operate the services from the station, began to consult on the changes they wanted to bring in in May 2018. At that time there was concern that they had proposed to reduce services at the station from 4 per hour to 3. Following consultation I was pleased to hear that Northern had revised these proposals and four services would again be running from the station throughout the day. We now understand that Northern have had to scrap that timetable due to delays in the electrification of the Manchester to Preston line and that this is one of the contributing factors as to why Northern have now had to put forward this new reduced timetable which will again see only 3 trains calling at the station per hour. I have of course raised this with Network Rail to seek their assurances on this project but it is extremely frustrating that they did not notify Northern until January of this year that the project would not

be completed by May therefore giving Northern very little time to reschedule services. I would be grateful if you could advise me what action the Government can take to ensure that further delays in this project are kept to a minimum and that communication will be improved to ensure that train operators are able to plan effectively.

Additional concerns have also been raised about the timings of services as I understand that all three trains calling at the station will do so within a 15 minute window with a large 49 minute gap between the 8.35 and 9.24 morning peak services. Further to this there have been reports in the local press that Northern are considering implementing crowd control measures due to concerns about overcrowding on the station. When I have raised this with both Northern and Network rail I have been told that there are no other train paths on this stretch of track which is of course very busy due to services arriving and departing Manchester Piccadilly for stations across the country. We were however assured that after the opening of the Ordsall chord this would increase capacity around Manchester Piccadilly and I am concerned that Network Rail may not have given local stopping services the priority to ensure that trains can call at Heaton Chapel. This clearly needs to be resolved before the next review in December and I would be grateful for any assurances you can get from officials that Network Rail will give Northern the priority needed to run services that call at Heaton Chapel.

I would also be grateful if you could provide me with an update on the plans for an additional two through platforms at Manchester Piccadilly which are essential to increase capacity further around Manchester.

I am told that an additional service from Macclesfield to Blackpool will call at Heaton Chapel once the electrification works have been complete and that this would be scheduled to run after December 2018. This will of course improve the situation but in the meantime will leave my constituents for seven months with poorer services and without a guarantee that the service would defiantly be able to run if the Manchester to Preston electrification is delayed further.

I hope you will agree that this is a totally unacceptable situation for my constituents and I look forward to receiving an update on what positive action can be taken to address these concerns.

Yours sincerely



ANN COFFEY MP

ann.coffey.mp@parliament.uk